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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Picture Story No. 24

Washington, November 11, 1946

PITTSBURGH STEPS UP FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INSPECTIONS:

"The best thing that ever hit the Pittsburgh produce market," say wholesalers at Pittsburgh, Pa., of the expanded type of inspection service for fresh fruits and vegetables in operation there.

Pittsburgh is the only city in the country which now has this kind of Federally-supervised service in its produce market, but it can easily be extended to terminal markets elsewhere. The new set-up is an expansion of the inspection service in effect in Pittsburgh since 1918. It covers inspection of more than half of all fruits and vegetables coming in to that city's yards by rail. The old service inspected only cars that were subject to controversy.

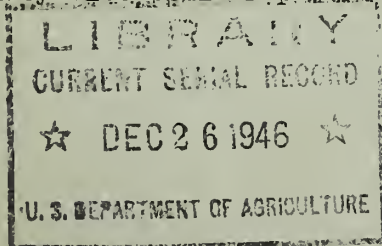
Sixteen leading dealers, who handle more than 75 percent of rail receipts of fruits and vegetables at the yards, inaugurated the new system in May, 1946, by forming the Pittsburgh Produce Inspection Service, Inc. They agreed that each member must have every one of his cars, except those holding potatoes or onions, unloaded at the yards inspected. Indications are that total inspections for the first year of operation will exceed 10,000 cars.

Under the Pittsburgh system, inspectors are paid by the Pittsburgh Produce Inspection Service, Inc., but they are selected, trained, and licensed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. They work directly under a Department supervisor, J. J. Gardner, who has handled inspection and grading for the Department in Pittsburgh for more than 25 years.

For each inspection, a certificate covering condition -- but not grade -- is issued. This gives the dealer the exact condition of the produce he has for sale. He knows just how much green, turning, or ripe fruit or vegetables, as well as how much, if any, bruised, soft, or decayed produce, a car contains. The results of these inspections are reflected back to the producer. They have proved of great value in obtaining better packaging, better packing, and freedom from bruises and other damage.

The Pittsburgh inspection service starts its week's work at 7:30 Sunday morning. Sorting and piling crews then begin getting things ready for Monday morning sales.

Reaching the market just ahead of his inspection crew, Inspector Gardner, known as "Pop," finds the reports on cars to be inspected left by members of the trade. These reports give the car numbers and tell what fruit or vegetable is in each car. They also tell "Pop" how big a job is ahead of him during the next few hours.



"Pop" divides the reports among the inspectors, who immediately set out to locate the cars on the tracks alongside the terminal. Each car to be inspected is chalk-marked with "IS", written like a dollar sign with one line instead of two, standing for "Inspection Service."

As soon as the seal on the car is broken and the doors are opened, the inspector is there to observe the general condition of the inside of the car. He notes all shifting and breakage, the ice in the bunkers, and the temperature of the product.

Then, as the crates or baskets of celery or peaches or peppers are unloaded from the car, the inspector takes samples, the number depending on the commodity, but always large enough to be representative of the whole car. Each container from the sample is opened and the contents are carefully examined.

To keep the market well covered at all times, the Pittsburgh inspectors work on a varied schedule. Three inspectors are on the job Sunday. Another crew of three takes over Sunday night. On Monday night, one crew of three works from 6:30 p.m. to 2 a.m., and another crew, coming on at 10:30 p.m., works through until well after sunrise. Only one or two men are on duty on Friday nights, which are quiet.

Members of the Pittsburgh Produce Inspection Service, Inc., pay \$4.00 a car for their inspection service. This fee is paid to the Pittsburgh Produce Inspection Service, which, in turn, reimburses the Department of Agriculture for overhead expenses. Inspector Gardner and his clerical force take care of the details and prepare checks and other papers. All certificates are made out and mailed from his office, with additional help furnished by the organization.

P. J. Schaming, of J. E. Corcoran Company, is president of the inspection service; W. H. Carson, of I. Cohen Sons, Inc., is vice-president and secretary; and A. C. O'Donnell, of O'Donnell Fruit Company, is treasurer.
